

80% of Americans believe that our schools should focus on American citizenship, not ethnic identity. Majorities of Latinos (70%) and African-Americans (54%) agree.

UNITY NOT UNIFORMITY

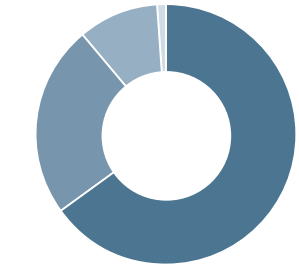
In a nation that celebrates its diversity, we need to remind ourselves that we are also part of “one nation indivisible.” Parents of school children, regardless of background, agree.

In too many ways, current attitudes sanction dual citizenship, multilingual ballots, and bilingual instruction rather than English immersion. Instead of one America, there are voices for many Americas, or even no America at all. Few would intend this result, but it may be the inevitable consequence of citizens not being able to communicate in a common language and placing other loyalties above their allegiance “to the flag and the republic for which it stands.”

The kind of unity Americans celebrate does not demand uniformity. America is enriched by diversity. It is preserved by unity. Yet while appreciating the benefits of diversity, Americans should affirm their commitment to national unity, a shared culture, a common language, and defining ideals. It is noteworthy that 96% of those surveyed in the HarrisInteractive poll believed that it was important for the “future of

the American political system that all citizens be able to speak and read English.” We should not adopt policies that perpetuate division or that compromise our national allegiance.

Americans agree fairly equally across party and age categories that the U.S. is divided along ethnic and cultural lines. 80% of Whites, 86% of African-Americans, and 74% of Latinos are concerned about this division.



Somewhat divided 65%
Very divided 24%
Not very divided 10%
Not at all divided 1%

PROVIDING FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE

The solemn rows of silent graves at Arlington National Cemetery are a somber reminder to all of us that the blessings of liberty come at a price. A nation cannot long survive without full respect and support for those willing to pay the price.

UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is of a nation, and democratic citizenship is of a democratic nation. But some believe the idea of national citizenship is out-moded, not in keeping with the requirements of a global economy, or the challenges of world peace.

It seems to some that nations pose a barrier to the efficient movement of workers, investment and technology. But there are other values at stake, such as what American companies owe to their fellow citizens and to the nation that charters and protects them.

A person cannot literally be a “citizen” of the world or of a continent or any other geographical

entity. The idea of “global citizenship” confuses and undermines meaningful civic education. Civic education should be based on the distinctive features of citizenship in American democracy, not on the misleading idea that one can be a “citizen” of the world.

LET US BEGIN THE CONVERSATION.

The challenges are great, but so are the opportunities. Being an American involves rights, as well as responsibilities. The Bradley Project offers a number of thoughts for how we might go forward as a people, from a renewed focus on the teaching of American history at all levels, to encouraging efforts designed to ensure immigrants learn English, understand democratic institutions, and participate fully in the American way of life.

Please see the Executive Summary and full report for these thoughts and recommendations.



THE BRADLEY PROJECT ON
AMERICA’S NATIONAL IDENTITY
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E PLURIBUS UNUM OVERVIEW

THE BRADLEY PROJECT ON
AMERICA’S NATIONAL IDENTITY

June 2008

AMERICA IS FACING AN IDENTITY CRISIS.

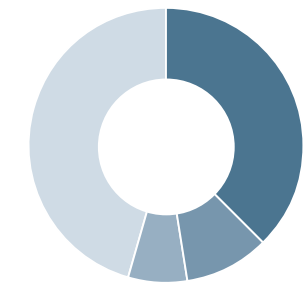
The next generation of Americans will know less than their parents about our history and founding ideals. And many Americans are more aware of what divides us than of what unites us. We are in danger of becoming not “from many, one”—E Pluribus Unum—but its opposite, “from one, many.”

The Bradley Project on America’s National Identity was created to initiate a national conversation on this challenge and to affirm that *what unites us is far greater than what divides us*. A sense of national identity is necessary to enable individuals to transcend self-absorption and commit to the common good. Without it, America can neither perpetuate its institutions nor defend itself.

AMERICANS’ VIEWS

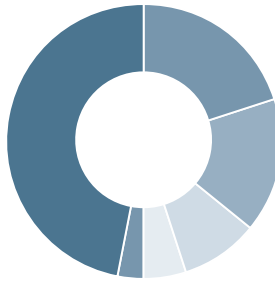
To inform its work, the Bradley Project asked HarrisInteractive to conduct a study on Americans’ views on national identity. While 84 percent of the respondents still believe in a unique American identity, 63 percent believe this identity is weakening. Almost a quarter—24 percent—believe we are already so divided that a common national identity is impossible. In their minds, it is already too late. And young people—on whom our continued national identity depends—are less likely than older Americans to be proud of their country or to believe that it has a unique national identity. This is an identity crisis.

84% of Americans believe that we “share a unique national identity based on a shared set of beliefs, values, and culture.” The younger one is, the less likely one is to believe there is a national identity.



Yes, somewhat	46%
Yes, definitely	38%
No	10%
Not sure	7%

Of the 84% of Americans who believe there is a national identity, 63% report that this identity is growing weaker.



Somewhat weaker	47%
Neither weaker nor stronger	20%
Much weaker	16%
Somewhat stronger	9%
Not sure	5%
Much stronger	3%

THE CHALLENGES

A NATION BASED ON AN IDEA

America is unique among nations in being founded not on a common ethnicity, but on a set of ideas. A nation based on ethnicity perpetuates itself by the fact of birth. But a nation founded on an idea starts anew with each generation and with each new group of immigrants. Knowing what America stands for is not a genetic

inheritance. It must be learned, both by the next generation and by those who come to this country. In this way, a nation founded on an idea is inherently fragile. And a nation that celebrates the many ways we are different from one another must remind itself constantly of what we all share.

democracy
education
freedom
patriotism
pride
opportunity
gratitude
rule of law

When asked in the Harris survey, “What does it mean to you to be an American?” the vast majority of respondents, in their own words, stressed freedom: free speech, free movement, freedom of religion, freedom of opportunity, political freedom, freedom from fear and tyranny, freedom to own property, freedom to get a good education, and freedom to pursue happiness. Respondents also cited the importance of the Constitution, the rule of law, fairness, patriotism, a common language, and the American way of life.

“[W]e must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.”

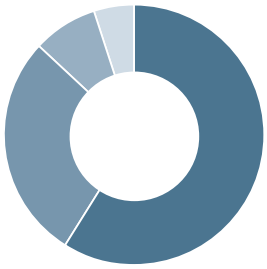
– Benjamin Franklin

PRESERVING AMERICA’S MEMORY

“History,” wrote President John F. Kennedy, “is the means by which a nation establishes its sense of identity and purpose.” But America’s memory appears to be slipping away. On the 2006 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Civics Test, the majority of eighth graders could not explain the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Only five percent of seniors could accurately describe the way presidential power can be checked by Congress and the Supreme Court.

The reasons for this failing are not hard to find—boring textbooks that lack narrative drive, a neglect of America’s heroes and dramatic achievements, curriculum standards that push the founding period out of high school into the lower grades, and teachers inadequately prepared in American history. Too often, students are taught more about America’s failings than its successes. Absent are those “mystic chords of memory” that Abraham Lincoln believed held our country together. A rich and balanced his-

Nearly 90% of Americans believe that colleges and universities should be required to teach U.S. history and government.



Definitely should	59%
Maybe should	28%
Maybe should not	8%
Definitely should not	5%

tory best prepares young people for informed democratic participation.

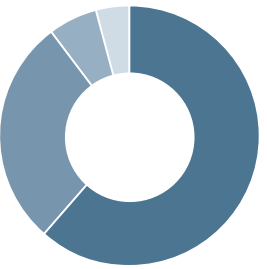
PROMOTING INFORMED PATRIOTISM

There are dangers to certain kinds of patriotism, but there are equal dangers to no patriotism at all. There is a middle ground, “a patriotism of principles,” to use the language of the American Federation of Teachers, based on a “common core of history [that] binds us together.” Americans should embrace an informed patriotism that expresses our devotion to our country and our bond with our fellow citizens.

BECOMING AMERICANS

Today immigration is at its highest levels since the 1920s. The more people who come to this country, the more crucial it is that all become Americans in the fullest sense. America has successfully met this challenge in the past and can do so again, but it will take effort. Newcomers to America should be encouraged to participate fully in American social, economic and civic life.

89% of Americans believe that “Americanization, including learning English and embracing American culture and values, is important in order for immigrants to successfully fulfill their duties as U.S. citizens.” 89% of African-Americans and 90% of Latinos agree.



Strongly agree	61%
Somewhat agree	28%
Somewhat disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	4%